

The Parables of and Power in Jesus – January 3 2021

Introduction — Many people are glad to have 2020 in their Rear view mirrors!! To start this year off Right, let us spend several weeks considering the PARABLES and ACTIONS of JESUS, as we see in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

I. Why the parables of Jesus???

1. One of the great hallmarks of Jesus was his parables!

2. Jesus was not a philosopher!!!

3. The three greatest Greek philosophers were: Socrates; his student, Plato; and his student, Aristotle, who was the tutor and teacher of the son of the great Greek general, Philip of Macedonia. Philip's son, Aristotle's student— you know him better as Alexander the Great.

4. But Jesus was not a sage like Socrates; he was not a creator of complex mental images of eternal values, like Plato; and Jesus did not dabble in science and mathematics, as Aristotle did.

5. No, Jesus was a profound teacher of the intent of God, based on the law of Moses, about how persons should be faithful to God, and how we should treat one another according to God's will for us.

6. His three primary ways of teaching were:

(1) straight instruction, like much of the sermon on the mount;

(2) parables, which have one main point in a short and usually simple story;

(3) and his actions were also teaching points— often, his healings and actions were sort of “acted out parables”.

ii. The parable and action today —

A. The parable —

1. Matthew 7: 24— 29 — >> the parable of the builders at the end of the Sermon on the Mount.

2. What will you base your life upon????

3. Today, if you base your life on the principles of the world around you, on the things you see in movies & on TV, the things you hear in popular songs & read in books & magazines— you will build your life on foundations of sand!! — you might lose all sense of morality, of right & wrong; you may wind up trying drugs, or sleeping with every—body or every-thing like on Peyton Place, Melrose Place or the Real Housewives of Atlanta; or thinking that “everybody else acts that way— am I the only honest, moral person left????”

4. Build instead, on the rock

5. II Corin. 10:5 says: “...and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (niv)

6. Soak your mind in the things of God!!

7. Start with the word of God— study the bible regularly, in Sunday school each week, and in other bible studies.

8. Have a “quiet time” every day!!! A time of devotional reading (that’s what the upper room is for!), a time of prayer & a little Bible reading.

9. Read books written by christians! Fiction or non-fiction. C.S. Lewis is great; there are many good christian writers of fiction & contemporary issues that you can find at a christian book store somewhere. Ask a clerk for help.

B. The action —

1. Matthew 8: 1— 4 — >> the healing of the man with leprosy

2. Leprosy was a dreaded disease then. Almost any skin disease could be called “leprosy,” but the worst of them is what is now called “Hansen’s disease.”

3. Leprosy was the “AIDS” disease of that day: a terrifying and often deadly disease with no known cure. If a person got the contagious type of leprosy, a Jewish priest declared him a leper & banished him from his home & city. The leper was sent to live in a leper colony, where he would live with other lepers until he got better— (which was rare) — or until he died.

4. And so this desperate, diseased man asked Jesus to heal him! Perhaps he had already met with the priest, and heard those terrifying, condemning words: “unclean, unclean!!” If so, he was told “to tear his clothes, let his hair be [mussed], cover the lower part of his face and cry out ‘unclean! Unclean!’ ” as a warning to others. (lev. 13:45) perhaps this man had even said goodbye to his family, & was on his journey to the nearest leper colony— when he heard that Jesus the healer & teacher was nearby. “if only Jesus can heal me!!” He thought. “Jesus is my only hope!!!” And so he knelt before Jesus: “lord— make me clean.”

5. Jesus was his last & only hope!!! He was desperate!! He was willing to throw himself on Jesus’ mercy— and depend on Jesus for his life.

6. Do you want to know what the question was in the minds of the people who watched that day as Jesus stretched out his hand????!! They were not wondering if Jesus would heal the man with leprosy. They wondered: ‘will Jesus catch the leprosy??’ The answer?? The man became clean— healed!! The man’s trust in Jesus was rewarded.

7. The way Jesus healed this person and so many others, inspired christians and many people over the centuries — that we do not have to simply accept illnesses and chronic conditions as “divine situations that we just must accept — that cannot be changed” !!!

8. I believe that the determination in medicine and medical science for 20 centuries, and especially in recent centuries— the determination to heal, and see recovery in persons, whenever

possible, is inspired by the healing of persons as Jesus did it, miraculously, again and again during his earthly ministry !!!

9. Other philosophies and religions around the world tell their believers to “accept these illnesses or crippling injuries— they are the will of God” or the will of the gods.

10. But Jesus did not accept the crippling, and fatal, results of injuries and illnesses. He healed. And i believe that western medicine is at least partly inspired by the healing stories of jesus, like this one, to hope and work toward the healing of countless people over the years, and down through the centuries.

Conclusion — two months after Nancy & I were married, I took her to see the city of Chicago for her 1st time. My sister lived there— we stayed at her apartment, & Lynne took off from work one day to show us around the city. We went to the sears tower— one of the tallest buildings in the world. From the observation deck at the top— you can see into Indiana, Wisconsin— and the entire city of Chicago!! But what impressed me so much was to see the 10 foot high model of the building— the skyscraper is over 1400 feet tall (about a quarter of a mile– straight up!!), & yet the model shows that the foundation of that huge building is sunk hundreds of feet into the solid rock of the Illinois countryside! You cannot build such a huge, mammoth building to resist the powerful winds off of Lake Michigan— without a solid foundation!!

Our lives today face troubling storms, and powerful winds of unwelcome change in our country, and in our world. We all need a solid foundation!!

Is Jesus the foundation of your life?? Why don't you ask him to be the foundation of your life— every part of your life— — — >>> today??